EQUALITY COLORADO

The EQUAL Times

The Newsletter of Equality Colorado

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PO Box 300476 • Denver, CO 80203
(303) 839-5540 • (888) 557-4441 toll-free • (303) 839-1361 fax
equalityco@aol.com • www.tde.com/~equality

SCHOOL PRAYER

Safety: Providers' Perspectives

by Kris Kailey

COLORADO YOUTH ARE COMING OUT. And they are sometimes paying a price. Throughout the state, GLBT youth and youth providers report harassment and intimidation as a result of teens revealing their true sexual orientations and identities. For some, the fear of retribution is enough to keep them closeted well into their adult lives. For others, hiding who they are is more painful than the taunts, threats and discrimination. For most, peer and adult support can be the deciding factor between a life of covering up and a life of freedom and self-acceptance.

There are varying degrees of support for these teens in Colorado communities and schools. The Colorado Safe Schools Coalition (CSSC) hopes to change that. Initiated in April of 1997 by Dr. Lynn Levine, the goals of CSSC are Coalition goals include:

- To document school-based violence and harassment against Colorado youth on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
- To provide crisis intervention, referrals and advocacy to youth experiencing school-based

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More on schools!

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p. 4 Why Now?
p. 8 Rundown of CSSC

Youth profiles on pp. 1, 3, 4, & 8!

Behind the Headlines
Profiles of Colorado Youth

"Dressing Gay"

Jeremie Garza is a friendly, soft-spoken high school senior who hopes to pursue a career in graphic design. His wardrobe is similar to other young men his age, with clothes ranging from what he calls "preppy"—slacks with a shirt and vest—to leather pants. And, like other teens, he wears jewelry, including a necklace and bracelet in hues that match the rainbow colors of the sticker on his car. Jeremie has been dressing in the same styles since his soph-omore year, but it was never an issue at his school, Lutheran High School, a private

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Is it Safe to Worship Yet?

by Rev. Laurene Lafontaine

FEELING SAFE IN A COMMUNITY OF WORSHIP IS VITALLY IMPORTANT. As Voices of Faith continues to work with local congregations, we are seeing a growing number of congregations declare themselves welcoming to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, our families and friends. This spring we are printing our annual list of welcoming congregations throughout Colorado. The supportive congregations list has grown from 20 congregations to over 60 churches, synagogues and worship gatherings.

Of course, this list is always in progress. Congregations are continually having conversations with and about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. More and more congregations have GLBT support and social groups. What is so encouraging is that GLBT people are coming out every Friday and Sunday in their congregations. Parents and friends are coming out and helping to flesh out the "issue." Gradually, hearts are being touched through personal encounters.

VOF inside!

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p. 7 Local Ex-Gay ministries

YET, THERE IS STILL MUCH to be done. For every supportive congregation, there are several who are still cautious and timid about even beginning the dialogue. Not to mention those congregations where there is no positive discussion about GLBT people. VOF will continue to provide resources for local congregations; to work together with GLBT people of faith, clergy, and lay spiritual leaders; and to be a witness for justice and peace. Of course, our hope is that eventually all faith communities will live into the reality of an inclusive and welcoming family of faith. Soon, we trust!!

Upcoming Equality Events

See p. 11 for more on these exciting events!

June

June 6: "Across the Divide"
Equality Colorado's Western Regional Conference, Montrose.
Bringing the Western Slope together!

June 13: "Building Bridges"
Equality Colorado's Southern Regional Conference, Cañon City. *Live in the (719) area code? Be there!*

June 27: Pride Awards, 7-9 p.m.
Equality Colorado's First Annual Event to Recognize Local Heroes. *Kick off your Pridefest weekend!*

July

July 18: Golfing for Justice
Our annual fundraiser on the links!

July 24-26: Claiming the Spirit
The 4th annual Voices of Faith Conference. Registration details on p. 5.

September

September 18-20: Justice Now
Equality Colorado's seminal statewide organizing conference.

Nominate your local hero for the Equality Pride Awards (June 27)!
See p. 11 for details.

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School Report: Schools on the Line

by Sue Anderson and Jonathan Kelley

School. For some, the word evokes images of orderly classrooms, a safe place to expand your mind and learn new skills and concepts and a path to a successful future. For others, the images are not so positive. Throughout the country, from rural to suburban to urban, schools are plagued by increasing violence.

Think about the recent shootings in Jonesboro, Ark., allegedly by two young boys. Four girls and a female teacher were killed in an environment where they thought they were safe. It is no accident that the victims were girls. Somehow, these boys got the message that if a girl does you wrong, it is within their right to get revenge through violence. It seems, perhaps, to have been domestic violence — an ultimate act of youthful misogyny. Where and how did these boys get this message?

Permission to be violent runs throughout our society, and schools are not immune. If we are to change this trend, it will have to be through changing how we think and interact as a culture. How do we teach kids to accept and value people who are different? How do we teach them and adults to accept that we will not all agree? How do we develop an atmosphere of respect where at the very least there is agreement that it is not okay to do harm to each other for any reason?

As this issue of *The Equal Times* shows, anti-gay harassment is in schools too. Even in 1998, youth, teachers, and administrators still seem to believe they have permission to ostracize students perceived as gay, or to use anti-gay epithets to ridicule any student. And, as with all forms of harassment, it will often escalate into violence.

Too often, those in a position of power are unwilling to address the root cause of this violence -- our culture's underlying belief in GLBT inferiority. Effeminate boys are bad. "Tomboys" may be dangerous, too, especially if they don't quickly learn to play the Dating Game.

It's true, schools have become a crucible for all kinds of larger cultural battles. Everyone with a cause, including our movement, sees schools as one of the most important places to get their message out. And our opposition will stop at nothing, it seems, to keep the message that "GLBT people deserve respect" OUT of the school (witness their attacks on the documentary "It's Elementary"). The question becomes framed as just one more cultural battle.

But lost in this larger discussion is the plain fact of anti-gay violence and harassment in schools. It is never okay for religious objection, gender norms, or cultural stereotypes to interfere with the learning process. Threats, physical abuse, taunting and other forms of harassment are never justified; it's never okay to ignore violence in order to try to seem neutral in a cultural battle.

Too often, those in a position of power are unwilling to address the root cause of this violence -- our culture's underlying belief in GLBT inferiority.

We must all join together to work to make sure that if nothing else, students are treated with respect and violence is removed from schools. In terms of anti-gay violence, it's a little tricky. The targets may be kids who openly identify as GLB or T or not. Some school administrators and teachers welcome us with open arms. Others refuse to meet with us at all. Nonetheless, the problem exists and we need to find creative and non-threatening ways to respond.

The Colorado Safe Schools Coalition is working hard at figuring out ways to do all of this and we need your help. Here's how you can play a part:

1. Start a Safe Schools Coalition chapter in your community. Schools mirror their communities. Outside Denver and Boulder, including the suburbs, it's difficult to find fair policies for all students in this state. Ask schools in your area what they are doing to address the problem of anti-gay harassment and violence. Ask if you can distribute Colorado Safe Schools Coalition information or materials about any of the member groups at schools or youth organizations in your area. Contact Sue at Equality for ideas on how to get involved.

2. Start a Gay/Straight Alliance in your school
The cornerstone of our movement for justice is that invisibility and silence continue to serve the cause of cultural homophobia. Gay/Straight Alliances are a tool to reduce that invisibility. If you are a student, teacher, or otherwise involved in your school, contact GLSEN or another school's club to find out how to start your own such organization. Remember, this kind of visibility can be risky. Only start an organization if you're confident about your safety and the presence of allies.

3. Talk to your local health department
Throughout the state, county health departments are some of the most understanding places when it comes to prevention work. Unfortunately, they too are under attack by the far right who seem to believe that any effort to help GLBTQ youth is dangerous to our society. Ask your health department what kind of prevention programs they offer around suicide, substance abuse, etc.

4. Become an individual member of CSSC
Contribute $25 (or more) to help support our work. Payable to CSSC, c/o Equality Colorado, PO Box 300476, Denver, CO 80203.

5. Work with CSSC member agencies.
Volunteer with one of the member agencies (see p. 8 for a listing). Attend a training sponsored by the Colorado Safe Schools Coalition or a member agency to learn how to effectively respond to situations of anti-gay harassment and violence.

Yes! I want to support Equality Colorado's work to secure equality for all....no exceptions.

Name_____ Phone_____

Address_____

City, State, Zip_____

❑ I am interested in Equality's Equity Fund sustainer giving program. Please send me information.

❑ I would like to make a donation of:

___$25 ___$50 ___$75 ___$100 other $_____

Checks should be made payable to *Equality Colorado*, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization to which contributions are tax-deductible OR you can charge your donation to your:

VISA or MasterCard (circle one) Card #_____

Expiration date:_____ Signature_____

Return to: Equality Colorado, PO Box 300476, Denver, CO 80203 (303) 839-5540 • (888) 557-4441

The Equal Times is the newsletter of Equality Colorado. Equality Colorado's mission is to work to secure equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. We seek to create an environment where people are respected, open dialogue is encouraged and the truth is spoken about the diversity of our families and sexual identities.

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Editor: Jonathan Kelley
Contributors: Kris Kailey, Rev. Laurene Lafontaine, Rebecca Buretta, Sue Anderson

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PO Box 300476, Denver, CO 80203
phone (303) 839-5540 • fax (303) 839-1361
phone toll free in Colorado (888) 557-4441
email: equalityco@aol.com
website: http://www.tde.com/~equality

School Report

Providers' Perspectives

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violence and harassment because of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

- To provide resources, training and information about sexual orientations and gender identities to school staff so they can more effectively serve their students.
- To educate the public about the need for understanding and acceptance of all youth regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Although Equality Colo-rado plays a coordinating role in the Coalition and acts as the fiscal agent, the Coalition is the work of all the member organizations, a rundown of which can be found on p. 8.

A CATALYST FOR THE FOUNDING of the CSSC was the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, developed by the Center for Disease Control. The survey has been implemented in numerous school districts throughout the country for several years and has focused on high-risk behaviors of high school students. In Massachusetts, Vermont and the Seattle Public School system, the survey included questions on sexual orientation identification, the sex/gender of sexual partners and experience of anti-gay and general sexual harassment. The surveys in these districts revealed that approximately 3-5% of high school-aged students described themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and/or reported sexual contact with a member of the same sex. The results were sobering (see below).

Just as compelling, however, was the finding of the survey that students who identified themselves as heterosexual but reported being the victim of anti-gay harassment were over three times more likely to skip school because of feeling unsafe en route to or at school during the past month and over five times more likely to have made a suicide attempt requiring medical treatment in the past year. Other high risk behaviors, such as increased drug and alcohol use and sexual activity, were reported as well for GLB youth and straight youth perceived as GLB. "This is important," says Merlin Logan, head of the coalition of PFLAG chapters in Colorado, "because the religious right and Colorado for Family Values say that gay kids have more destructive behavior due to their 'lifestyle' when, in fact, straight kids exhibit the same behaviors and are not gay. It's not the lifestyle that causes their demise, it's society's view that causes it."

"The religious right ... say[s] that gay kids have more destructive behavior due to their 'lifestyle' when, in fact, [targeted] straight kids exhibit the same behaviors"

The survey results were concerning to Levine and the other agencies who formed the CSSC. They wanted to track these problems in the state of Colorado and provide intervention as well as preventative services aimed at GLBT youth and the schools that serve them. Each of the agencies in the statewide coalition has taken on a part of providing these services.

All these programs and others throughout the state hope to help Colorado GLBT youth find a safe haven at school and in the community. And now, more than ever, it is necessary because Colorado youth are coming out in record numbers. "Youth are coming out, speaking out. Giving them a voice is the most important thing we can do," says Levine.

THE CSSC IS HELPING to give GLBT youth a voice, but teens have been doing a lot of talking on their own as well. Some Colorado youth have come

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Results of Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Developed by the Centers for Disease Control, based on information from surveys administered in Massachusetts, Vermont, and Seattle where questions about sexual orientation were asked.

Gay, lesbian and bisexual-identified students, and those who reported sexual contact with a member of the same sex were:

- over 5 times more likely to be the **target of offensive comments** regarding sexual orientation at school or on the way
- from 1 3/4 to over 4 times more likely to have been **threatened or injured by another youth with a weapon at school** during the past year
- approximately 3 times more likely to have been **injured in a fight severely enough to have required medical attention**
- 2 - 4 1/2 times more likely to **skip school because of feeling unsafe** en route to or at school during the prior month
- over 4 times more likely to have made a **suicide attempt requiring medical treatment** in the previous year

Behind the Headlines
Profiles of Colorado Youth

"The HHART Kids"

IN OCTOBER, 1995, three friends decided to start a club at Smoky Hill High School. They were upset about the passage of Amendment 2 and the tension caused at school by one of them coming out as bisexual. According to member Christina Swasey, who was involved with the club from the beginning, the club was formed to discuss political issues around Amendment 2 and sexual orientation, as well as to "socialize, plan activities, have speakers, (discuss) books and take field trips" designed to educate members.

Because a school club needed a faculty sponsor, Linda Harmon, Consumer and Family Studies teacher, was recruited during a class discussion of Amendment 2. Several gay and straight students were interested in joining, and the Homosexual Heterosexual Alliance Reaching for Tolerance began putting up posters and advertising their club. They were told by school officials that they could not use the word "homosexual" on their posters, so they used the acronym HHART and their logo — a rainbow colored heart. The club met once a week, holding discussions, potlucks and video nights as well as planning to march in Pridefest 97. Over time, they developed an extensive membership which now includes thirty-eight students.

In mid-1996, HHART, co-chaired by students Andrea Ward and Crystal Worthington, decided to apply for club status, which would allow them to be listed in the parent/student handbook and would legitimize what they were doing. "It was important to the kids," states Harmon. HHART met all the requirements of a school club — they were student initiated, they had a faculty sponsor, membership was open to everyone and they had a sufficient number of members — but their application for club status was denied. The Activities and Athletics Association, a group of faculty, administrators and school district personnel given the task of approving school clubs, gave no reason for the denial other than that the district did not want to grant supplemental pay to the sponsor. HHART was told they were not an official club, they were a support group, and they were assigned a counselor to sit in on all meetings. The members "were upset," according to Harmon. They did not want the club to be a support group. After brainstorming options, the members finally contacted the Colorado Legal Initiatives Project (CLIP) in October of 1997.

After several months of conversations with the school district, no agreement was reached and CLIP assisted the members in filing a lawsuit against the school in January, 1998. At the court hearing on February 27, 1998, the judge felt the suit could be settled out of the courtroom, and, after discussion, HHART was granted official club status.

"THERE IS A SUPPORT GROUP for gay students at the school, but we are not it," states Annette Santomassimo. In fact, none of the members is certain how many club members are gay. "It doesn't matter," says Annette. "People make assumptions that everyone in the club is gay. (The members) only disclose if they want to. We prefer it that way. We don't segregate."

Straight students want to be involved with the club "to spread diversity and educate," says Andrea Ward. One member states, "(Straight students) have an obligation to support gay kids. Straight people need to be part of the movement as well."

Some students have had problems at school due to their association with the club. One member has gotten "negative remarks in class and in the hall, (students) saying they disagree, especially after the decision." Another states, "I've had to stand up to a lot of people. They're uninformed." A member says he has experienced "verbal assaults" based on his sexual orientation. He states, "Most who have a problem with the club or (sexual) orientation are underclassmen." But the club "shows them that gay people are here, talking to them, eating with them at lunch."

Most of the members have supportive parents. Harmon says, "This is the first year a member has not been kicked out of their home for coming out." Members say some teachers are supportive and some are not. But Harmon feels "we've really made headway within the school in the last three years. They know we exist." The club members are proud to belong to the club and wear HHART buttons on their clothing or backpacks. They are especially happy now that they have full club status.

"All the kids want is to be like anybody else," says Harmon. "For their club to be like anybody else's."

Providers' Perspectives

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out with the full support of school and community groups. Others have come out despite the lack of services in their area. The growing number of young people deciding to live openly with their true sexual orientations and gender identities has spawned a need for increased services such as those provided by CSSC members. More support is needed as teens continue to demand the right to be themselves in school, at home and in their communities. As a concerned teen or adult, you can help.

If you are a student, support your school's Gay/Straight Alliance or talk to administration, faculty, and other students about forming such a group. If you are unfamiliar with GLBT issues, get educated. Talk to peers in your school who have come out. Read books and publications. Volunteer for a GLBT youth organization. Ask your school if you can distribute information or materials about the groups in this article. If you need support, contact the Center at (303) 831-6268 x14, or your local PFLAG chapter, to locate a safe person at your school to talk to.

As an adult, you can help by attending a CSSC meeting and getting involved, starting a Safe Schools Coalition chapter in your community, or volunteering for any of the member agencies. Talk to area schools about what they are doing to ensure a safe learning environment and equitable treatment for all students. Talk to your local health department about their services to GLBT youth. Attend a training sponsored by the CSSC or a member agency to learn how to more effectively respond to anti-gay harassment and violence. Get educated about issues involving GLBT youth, then educate others. If you are a teacher or work in the schools, volunteer to be a safe person or a sponsor of a Gay/Straight Alliance or a GLBT support group. Become a member of the CSSC by contributing $25 or more to support their work.

You can contact the Colorado Safe Schools Coalition at P.O. Box 300476, Denver, CO 80203, or by calling any of the member organizations listed on p. 8.

"Youth are coming out, speaking out. Giving them a voice is the most important thing we can do."

Kris Kailey has been an Equal Times *contributing writer for a year. Kris is a social worker, a bass player, and a volunteer in the GLBT community.*

Behind the Headlines
Profiles of Colorado Youth

"The Lucky Guy"

Brad Givens is one of the lucky ones. He has been out at school as a gay young man since 10th grade. He is now a senior at Centennial High School in Pueblo and is one of the new youth group facilitators working with Pueblo After 2. After finding acceptance from his parents and a few friends in 8th and 9th grade, Brad had no problems with his schoolmates and teachers discovering his sexual orientation.

"Not that I was trying to hide it," Brad says. "When I turned 16, I bought a car and the first thing I did was go buy a gay pride bumper sticker."

Although he is the only student at his high school who is currently out to everyone, he has not experienced harassment. "At school I have not had a single problem with being gay. In fact I believe that, in many cases, being gay and coming out has brought me closer to my friends." He is aware of other students who are gay but not out. "I have had such a great coming out experience and I have shared that with them, but they just do not feel that they are ready."

The only difficulty Brad has experienced is with one coworker at a part-time job who called him names. The other employees and the owners of the store supported Brad and the coworker eventually quit. Brad feels that the reason more young people and gay people in general are not out in Pueblo is due to the "influence of Colorado Springs and the Colorado for Family Values presence" as well as a strong religious and cultural bias against gays. There are two gay bars in Pueblo, however, one of which sponsors a teen night and a college night.

Brad is currently planning for his new youth group through Pueblo After 2. He plans to start the group as a social and support group, discussing topics such as domestic violence, with speakers and movies on the topics. After the more serious topics of discussion, he plans to provide fun activities such as rock climbing, movies, coffee, or pizza. "I want the group to be a place where kids can come and have a good time and be themselves."

Behind the Headlines
Profiles of Colorado Youth
"Dressing Gay", continued from p. 1

religious school in Lakewood. It became an issue, he says, when he came out as gay.

Jeremie told a few friends that he was gay at the end of his junior year. When he returned to school as a senior, he was called in to speak to a teacher who had heard over the summer about his coming out. According to Jeremie, the teacher "quoted the Bible" and asked him how he could justify his behavior, then stated he would have to talk to the principal. Jeremie was called out of class to the principal's office for one or two meetings a week over the course of a month.

Jeremie stated that he was repeatedly questioned and he felt that "I was defending myself." He was told to remove the rainbow sticker from his car and to stop wearing his rainbow jewelry. He refused. He was told there would be a meeting with his parents. The meeting never happened. He was told he had to meet with his pastor, which he did. His pastor told him he would always be welcome at church.

During this time, Jeremie's car was repeatedly vandalized in the school parking lot. Jeremie states that students "took turns spitting on it, stuck gum on it, in the keyhole." There were also some minor dents. When he complained, the students were called in and a teacher was assigned to guard the parking lot. After a month, the meetings with the principal stopped, the teacher quit watching the parking lot and the subject was dropped. The vandals, who, according to Jeremie, admitted their guilt, were not punished, although the student handbook says that students who discriminate against or harass other students can be expelled.

A few weeks later, Jeremie was called in for more meetings, causing him to miss classes. He states he was told that if he would not cooperate by removing the sticker from his car, he would not be allowed to return to school for the second semester. He again refused, and, at the end of the semester, he was told that "if I didn't get rid of the sticker, the jewelry and change my way of dressing, I wasn't welcome the next semester." He did not return.

Jeremie currently attends the Career Education Center, a career school which is part of the Denver Public School System. It is a specialized school and students must apply to get in, demonstrating good grades and good attendance. He states, "CEC is very supportive. They have not asked me to change." He feels comfortable and accepted there.

When asked why he decided to come out, Jeremie stated, "I was tired of hiding. I was tired of hiding from my parents and friends." No other students have come out at Lutheran High School, although, on the day he was asked to leave, fifty students signed a petition asking the school to let him stay. Within a week, he says that some parents and staff members, but no teachers, had also signed. Letters have also been written to the school in his support.

He says he has no regrets and "I wish I would have done it sooner." Although he states he was told that if he would have "denied being gay and if I was more straight-looking, I could have stayed," he refused to deny his true sexual orientation. "Somebody has to do it," he says. "I can and I did."

Jeremie in his "gay" clothes

Why Now?

Why are young people coming out in the late 1990s, even in the face of adversity, harassment, threats and ridicule? Members of the Safe Schools Coalition have some ideas.

"All the activities the adult community is doing are very visible so kids see who they are at an earlier age. I am struck by how early harassment begins. Kids in elementary school are being harassed before they even know what gay means. Kids who aren't gay are harassed for perceived gender differences. (There is) more awareness of gay issues because they are targets or see some other child being a target." — ***Lynn Levine, founder of the Colorado Safe Schools Coalition***

"There are services for youth struggling with their sexuality. It makes them feel safe coming out. The media is contributing in a positive way. The generations are changing, people are more open to be educated about diversity. These kids have a different view about life. They're much more resilient. They're much more courageous. They don't fear being different." — ***Regina DiPadova, acting director of InsideOut in Colorado Springs***

"It reflects society. (Society is) more accepting of people in general. (Youth) either try to hide it or just come out and let it happen. (They are) not rebellious, (they) just are what they are." — ***Andrew Allen, facilitator of the Rocky Mountain Youth Group in Fort Collins***

"It's happening all over. Culturally, there are more role models. There aren't more numbers, (just) more avenues to express themselves. It's every bit as scary now as ten or twenty years ago. What is available is CLIP, AVP, the Center, PFFLAG, Equality Colorado, a broad base of community support. Kids can be active then get renewed. There's a place for kids to go to get renewed and validated."
— ***Emily Hassler, director of Youth Services at the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Community Services Center in Denver***

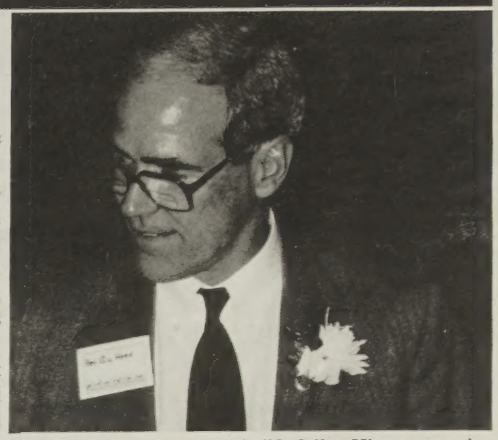
"Kids are more independent, more self-assertive, willing to be their true selves. Youth are more self-reliant. There are now positive images in the media and society for gay youth. (They) see signs that someone is supporting them." — ***Merlin Logan, head of the Colorado Coalition of PFFLAG Chapters***

"Society is now starting to let up on how bad it is to be gay and while it is still not totally socially acceptable, it does not mean that you will be exiled to some desert island. Also, I have noticed that the media is still having a heyday with gays. Now in almost every movie I see there is reference to or there is a gay character. Also television shows are becoming more accepting and have gay characters on their shows. I think that this is helping to provide gay role models that have never before been present in our society."
— ***Brad Givens, student and youth group facilitator for Pueblo After 2***

Voices of Faith for Human Rights

Remembering a True Leader

by Rev. Laurene Lafontaine



When my colleague, Rev. Gil Horn died this past January, I was struck when some people in our community barely recognized his name. Over the years working in the GLBT movement, it has become painfully apparent that we don't take time to really honor those men and women who have worked so hard for justice. There seems to be a tendency to forget our history as we strive to make progress. I am thrilled that the Pride Awards, scheduled for June 27 (see p. 11 for details), will be an opportunity to acknowledge good leadership and develop a collective history here in Colorado.

Gil Horn was such a hard working ally. He co-chaired the No on 1 campaign in 1991, successfully fighting that effort to repeal the sexual orientation section of Denver's anti-discrimination ordinance. As the Executive Director of the Colorado Council of Churches, he used his influence and passion for justice to rally other clergy and people of faith to work on that victorious campaign. He received all types of attacks for his outspoken and clear voice. I'll never forget his irreverent sense of humor, his hugs, nor the *Denver Post* picture of him with a huge smile, arms thrust upward and hands forming victory signs the night we won in Denver.

He co-chaired the campaign to fight Amendment 2. On that election night in '92, he stood up and reminded us that even though we had lost, we **would win** in the courts. Gil testified on our behalf at the legislature, made crucial calls to Governor Romer regarding the first veto of the same-sex marriage ban and used his political savvy when talking with elected officials.

As a co-pastor at Montview Blvd. Presbyterian Church for the past five years, he was prophetic while balancing the challenges of a diverse congregation. He lived his life fully. His presence in the Denver interfaith community is sorely missed. We have lost a tremendous friend and ally. The Denver Area Interfaith Clergy Conference will be honoring Gil at our 1st Annual Gil Horn Faith in Action Award Dinner. Please join us. It will be April 30 at Montview Presbyterian. Call me at (303) 839-5540 x3 for more information.

Upcoming events

For more information and to register, please call Rev. Laurene Lafontaine at (303) 839-5540 x3 or (888) 557-4441 x3.

First Saturday of the month: GLBT Spirituality Discussion Group, 10 a.m.-noon.

First Sunday of the month: VOF Interfaith Worship Service: 7 p.m. at Montview Blvd. Presbyterian Church, 1980 Dahlia in Denver.

April 30 Clergy Roundtable: "Honoring Same Sex Relationships," 8:30 - 10:30 a.m., Park Hill Congregational Church, 2600 Leyden in Denver.

April 30 The First Annual Denver Area Interfaith Clergy Conference Award Dinner presents The "Gil Horn Faith in Action" Award Honoring the late Rev. Gil Horn. Rabbi Steven Foster is the keynote speaker. The dinner will be 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at Montview Blvd. Presbyterian Church. The cost is $15 per person.

May 21 Clergy Roundtable: "Pastoral Care Issues within GLBT Communities" 8:30 - 10:30 am, Park Hill Congregational Church, 2600 Leyden in Denver.

June 25 VOF Pride Interfaith Worship Service at 7 p.m. 1st Universalist Church, Colorado & Hampden, Denver.

July 23-25 "Claiming the Spirit '98" Conference will be held at Park Hill United Methodist Church, 5209 Montview Blvd., Denver.

'98 Conference Welcomed

The fourth annual "Claiming the Spirit '98" Conference celebrates a first — this year we have been **invited (!)** to have our conference at Park Hill United Methodist Church. For the past two years, we have been at Montview Blvd. Presbyterian Church who graciously welcomed the conference. This year's conference will be July 23, 24 and 25.

We are excited about this year's conference: **Developing Spiritualities for the Long Haul** (Thanks to Rev. Jane Vennard for the phrase!). **The Rev. Dr. Nancy Wilson,** Vice-Moderator of the Universal Fellowship of the Metropolitan Community Churches and Senior Pastor at MCC LA in West Hollywood, will be a keynote speaker. She wrote the book, *Our Tribe: God, Jesus, the Bible and Queer Folks.* She is simply fabulous.

The Rev. Jimmy Creech, a United Methodist pastor who was recently declared innocent of violating the United Methodist Church's Polity after performing a holy union for a lesbian couple, has been invited to be a keynote speaker.

Carol White, founder and former music director of Harmony and recipient of the HRC Paul Hunter Award will be a keynote speaker. Carol's work in the religious communities and PFLAG has been instrumental and inspiring.

On the Friday evening, we are planning for a musical gala. Of course, there will be many workshops on Friday and Saturday. There will also be great food and wonderful fellowship. This year's cost will be $60 before June 30th, $75 July 1st-15th, and $85 at the door. To register, simply fill out the form below.

Claiming '98 Registration Form

Name:

Organization:
if applicable

Address:

City/State/ZIP:

Phone (home/work):

Email:

I have the following individual needs: (Requests must be received by July 1.)

- ☐ ASL Interpreter
- ☐ Vegetarian meals
- ☐ Braille
- ☐ Community Housing
- ☐ Other

SIGN ME UP FOR... **# reg. x cost = total**

- ☐ Early bird (**Before June 15**) _____ x $60 = _____
- ☐ Regular registration (**After June 15**) _____ x $75 = _____
- ☐ One-day only _____ x $35 = _____
- ☐ I want to make the following additional donation to support Voices of Faith's work. $ _____
- ☐ I need a scholarship for the Conference. (Please contact VOF for scholarship information).

Total amount: $ _____

METHOD OF PAYMENT

- ☐ Check enclosed payable to **Equality Colorado**
- ☐ Credit card (Visa or MasterCard only)

Number:

Expiration:

Name as it appears on card:

Signature:

Mail this to "Claiming the Spirit," c/o Equality Colorado, PO Box 300476 Denver, CO 80203. If paying by credit card, fax to (303) 839-1361
For more info, call us at (303) 839-5540 x3 or email eclaurene@aol.com.

Voices of Faith Listing of

Predominantly GLBT

Congregation Tikvat Shalom
303-331-2706
PO Box 6694, Denver, CO 80206
Please call for services

MCC of the Rockies
980 Clarkson, Denver
303-860-1819
Worship at 9 & 11 am
(Sign language interpreted at 10:55)

Pikes Peak MCC
730 N. Tejon Dr., Colorado Springs
719-634-3771
Sunday Worship at 5pm
Meets at All Soul's Unitarian Church

Family in Christ MCC
805 S. Shields, Fort Collins
970-221-0811
Worship at 6pm

Boulder MCC
303-861-5932
Worship at 6pm
Meets at 2650 Table Mesa Dr, Boulder

MCC Pueblo
719-543-6460
Worship at 5 pm
Wednesday Spirituality group: 6:30pm
Meets at Christ Congregational Church
Liberty and Bonforte, Pueblo

Christ Chapel of the Rockies
10 Fenton, Lakewood
303-235-8497
Independent/nondenominational charismatic
Wednesday worship at 7 pm
Sunday worship at 10 am

Dignity Denver (Catholic)
1100 Fillmore St., Denver
303-322-8485
Sunday Mass at 5 pm

United Church of Christ/Congregational
(Open and Affirming)

Washington Park UCC
400 S. Williams St., Denver
303-777-5304
Worship at 10:30 am

Sixth Ave. UCC
3250 E. 6th Ave., Denver
303-377-0173
Worship at 10:30 am
Children Education at 10:30 am
Adult Education at 11:45 am

Parkview Congregational Church (UCC)
12444 Parkview Dr., Aurora
303-366-5224
Sunday worship at 10 am

Wild Rose UCC
PO Box 3633, Evergreen 80437
303-670-5987
worship at 10:30 am
meets at Safehouse 3789 Ponderosa next to United Methodist Church of Evergreen

Park Hill Congregational Church (UCC)
2600 Leyden, Denver
303-322-9122
Worship at 10 am
Adult education at 11:15 am

First Congregational Church
1128 Pine, Boulder
303-442-1787
Worship at 9 am and 11 am
Adult education at 9 am

Plymouth Congregational Church
916 W. Prospect Rd., Fort Collins
970-482-9212
Worship: 8:20 am and 10:45 am
Education: 9:30 am

Christ Congregational Church
1003 Liberty, Pueblo
719-544-0746
Worship at 10 am

All Souls Unitarian Church
730 N. Tejon, Colorado Springs
719-633-7717
Worship at 10:30 am
Adult Forum at 9:15 am

United Methodist
(Reconciling)

St. Paul's United Methodist Church
16th & Ogden, Denver
303-832-4929
Worship at 10:30 am
Buddhist/Christian service at 5 pm

First United Methodist Church
1421 Spruce, Boulder
303-442-3770
Worship at 10:30 am
Adult Forum at 9:00 am

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Do you belong to or know of a faith community that should be listed in this directory? Let us know! We're looking to compile a comprehensive list and distribute it to people looking for supportive places to worship. Call Laurene at (303) 839-5540 x3 or toll-free at (888) 557-4441 x3 or email eclaurene@aol.com

Presbyterian
(More Light)

Capitol Heights Presbyterian Church
1100 Fillmore St., Denver
303-333-9366
Worship at 9:30 am
Adult education at 11:00 am

Family of Christ Presbyterian Church
2410 35th Ave., Greeley
970-330-0301
Worship at 10:30 am
Adult education at 9:30 am

Christ Presbyterian Church
434 W. Columbia St., Telluride
970-728-4536
Worship at 10:00 am

Unitarian/Universalist
(Welcoming)

1st Universalist Church
4101 E. Hampden, Denver
303-759-2770
Worship at 9:15 and 11 am

1st Unitarian Society of Denver
1400 Lafayette St., Denver
303-831-7113
Worship at 10:30 am

Other Supportive Faith Communities

ARVADA

Arvada Mennonite Church
5927 Miller, Arvada
303-424-6261
Worship at 9:30 am
Education at 11 am

Arvada United Methodist Church
6750 Carr St., Arvada
303-421-5135
Worship: 7:45 am, 9:00 and 10:30 am
Education Hour: 9:00 and 10:30 am

BOULDER

Jewish Renewal Community of Boulder
For information about services, call 271-3540

Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder
5001 Pennsylvania
303-494-0195
Worship at 10:30 am

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Boulder
PO Box 3153, Boulder
303-443-3912
Worship at 9:30 am

BROOMFIELD

United Church of Broomfield
303-466-8355
825 Kohl St.
Worship at 10:30 a.m.
Education Hour: 9:15 a.m.

COLORADO SPRINGS

Calvary United Methodist Church
4210 Austin Bluffs Pkwy
719-599-7250
Traditional Worship at 8 am,
Contemporary Worship at 9:30,
Blended Worship at 11 am
Education at 9:45 and 11am

CONIFER

St. Laurence's Episcopal Church
26812 Barkley Rd.
303-838-2457
Worship at 8 and 10:15 am

DENVER

Berkeley United Methodist Church
5200 W. 43rd
303-421-3349
Contemporary Service at 9:15 am
Children's Sunday School at 9:15am
Adult Education at 11:00 a.m.

Cameron United Methodist Church
1600 S. Pearl
303-777-7638
Contemporary worship at 9 am
Traditional worship at 10:45 am

1st Plymouth Congregational
3501 S. Colorado Blvd
303-762-0616
Worship at 8 and 10 am
Children's education at 10 am
Adult education at 9 and 11:20 am

Grant Ave. United Methodist
216 S. Grant Ave.
303-733-1400
Education at 9:00 am
Worship at 10:30am

Hearth Stone Community Church (Wiccan/pagan)
303-680-1741
Contact: Margaret Alia Denny
Gatherings: 7:30 pm night before the full moon, 1st Unitarian Church, 1400 Lafayette

Highlands United Methodist Church
3131 Osceola
303-477-5857
Contemplative Service at 8:15 am
Sunday School at 9:30 am
Regular service at 11:00 a.m.

Montview Blvd Presbyterian Church
1980 Dahlia St.
303-355-1651
Worship at 8:30 & 11 am
Education at 9:30 am

Our Savior's Lutheran Church
915 E. 9th Ave.
303-831-7023
Service of Prayer/Eucharist 8:00 am
Learning Hour at 9:45 am
Worship at 10:00 am

continued on page 7

Supportive Congregations

DENVER (cont.)

Park Hill United Methodist
5209 Montview Blvd.
303-322-1867
Worship: 9 and 11 a.m.
Education: 10:00

Salem United Church of Christ
5300 E. Florida Ave.
303-759-4649
Worship: 9:30 a.m.
Adult Bible Class: 8:30 a.m.
Children Education: 9:30 a.m.

Spirit of Joy Church of the Brethren
303-733-1400
meets at Grant Ave. Methodist Church, 216 S. Grant Ave.
Call for more information

St. Andrews Episcopal Church
2015 Glenarm St.
303-296-1712
Worship at 9 and 11 am

St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
1280 Vine St.
303-388-6469
Holy Eucharist at 7:45 & 9:30 am

St. Cecilia's Holy Orthodox Church
303-832-1420
Sunday: 10:00 AM Liturgy at 1160 Downing St. (private residence)
Wednesday: 6:30 P.M. Liturgy at 950 Lafayette, #303 (private residence)

St. John's Cathedral (Episcopal)
1313 Clarkson
303-831-7115
Worship: 7:30, 8, 9 and 11:00 am
Education: 10:00

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
1600 Grant St.
303-839-1432
Worship at 8:30 and 11 am
Education at 9 am

Temple Emanuel (Jewish)
51 Grape St
303-388-4013
Worship at Friday 8 pm
Saturday: Please call as the time varies. Religious Education Saturday and Sunday 9-12

Temple Micah (Jewish)
2600 Leyden
303-388-4239
Friday Services at 8 pm

Unity Temple
1555 Race
303-377-4838
Worship at 11 am
Children's education at 11 am

University Park UMC
2180 S. University Blvd.
303-722-5736
Worship: 9 and 10:30 am
Education: 9 am

ENGLEWOOD

First Presbyterian Church of Englewood
3500 S. Logan St.
303-761-8882
Worship: 10:30 am
Education: 9 (children and adults)

FORT COLLINS

Foothills Unitarian Church
1815 Yorktown Ave.
970-493-5906
Worship at 9 and 11 am

GOLDEN

Jefferson Unitarian Church
303-279-5282
14350 W. 32nd Ave.
Worship at 9 and 11 am

GREELEY

St. John's UCC
3815 W. 20th St.
970-356-8803
Worship: 10:30 am
Education: 9:00 am

LAKEWOOD

Lakewood United Church in Christ
100 Carr St
303-233-4401
Educational hour at 9:00
Worship at 10:15

Mile High Church of Religious Science
9079 W. Alameda
303-237-8851
Sunday Worship: 8:30, 10, 11
Wed Worship: 7pm

LITTLETON

Columbine Unitarian Universalist Church
8050 W. Coal Mine Ave.
303-972-1716
Worship at 10 am

High Country Community Church
303-683-9940
Worship at 10 am
Meets at Arapahoe Community College
in the Half moon Room.

St. Philip Lutheran Church
7531 S. Kendall Blvd.
303-979-4491
Worship: 8:00 am and 10:45 am
Education: 9:30 am

PARKER

Hilltop United Church of Christ
10926 E. Democrat Rd.
303-841-2808
Worship: 9:30 a.m.
Education: 9:30 a.m.

...and some not-so-supportive groups

Local Ex-Gay Ministries

by Rev. Laurene Lafontaine

RECENTLY, I RECEIVED a voice mail message from a woman whose parents were taking her to a group called Where Grace Abounds. This woman didn't know anything about this group and was wondering if it was supportive of gays and lesbians. I called her to let her know that this was an ex-gay ministry whose focus is heterosexuality or imposed celibacy. I never heard from her again.

There are numerous cases of parents forcing their children to go through these transformational or ex-gay ministries. It is important for the GLBT and Ally communities to have some working knowledge of these groups. Ex-gay ministries operate within a Christian context, whether it be a church based and funded group or a Christ-centered group based on an illness model such as Alcoholics Anonymous. I have yet to see a non-Christian ex-gay ministry.

In a conversation with the former pastor overseeing the local "Where Grace Abounds" group, I asked if I could just sit in a group and listen. I was told no. His rationale was that the group needed to be controlled by "safe" people who would make sure it didn't turn into a "meat market for dating." Of course, this only piqued my curiosity because if prayer and Bible study was helpful in changing one's orientation or helping them "discover" the gift of celibacy, it should be able to work, regardless of who's in the room. At that point, I wanted to have a deeper understanding of ex-gay ministries.

AFTER THAT CONVERSATION, I began to meet survivors of ex-gay ministries through Evangelicals Reconciled in Denver. Their stories recount similar tales. When someone expresses a desire to become involved with an ex-gay group, they must go through an interview process with the director and a board member. Their desire for change is determined to be valid or not. In some groups, the person is required to go through personal counseling until they are given approval for membership in the larger group. The person is filtered through various levels of the group process after gaining approval from staff and board members. It is a very controlled internal process in which there is little room for questioning. Outside contacts are discouraged. Anyone "living in the lifestyle" is off limits. For a process that is supposed to be Spirit-led and transformational through Christ, it seems very controlled by a limited understanding of scripture, human sexuality and leadership.

For many, they spend most of their lives trying to be transformed into celibates or heterosexuals, all for acceptance of themselves, their church and God. The sadness comes in the reality that God already accepts and loves them just as God created them to be ... gays and lesbians. The tragedy and suffering caused by these ministries is immense. The attempted suicides and suicides of women and men struggling with their sexuality in a heterosexist church are all the evidence that we should need to condemn these harmful practices. Yet, the blame is placed upon the struggling person. We need to challenge these these so-called ministries that are taking the lives of our brothers and sisters.

IT IS INDEED AN OUTRAGE that churches would endorse and support such fraudulent practices. They have certainly missed the point of Jesus who called Christians to love God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength; and to love their neighbor as self. Funny, I don't remember Jesus saying "only love yourself if you are heterosexual, otherwise deny who you have been created to be." **Why the heck don't I remember that? Perhaps that's because Jesus didn't say it!**

Some Colorado Ex-Gay Ministries

- **Where Grace Abounds,** under the umbrella of Exodus, International.
- **Ababa's Heart Ministries,** under the umbrella of Exodus, International.
- Rev. Jami Breedlove, an "ex-lesbian" has her **Jami Breedlove Ministries,** a live-in program in Loveland. She's testified against the Fort Collins Human Rights Ordinance inclusion of sexual orientation, and urges her members to "take back the rainbow" from gays and lesbians. "We can go into the enemy's camp and take back what he has stolen from us," that is, God's sign of the covenant with man found in *Genesis*.
- Archbishop Chaput of the Denver Catholic Archdiocese has started a group called **Courage** which is based on the 12-step Homosexual Anonymous illness model.
- A University of Denver student wants the administration and student leaders to endorse his ex-gay program based on **Living Waters,** a group based in Southern California for "sexually broken" individuals (gays and lesbians).

School Report

A Look at Colorado Safe Schools Coalition Members

Equality Colorado
Located in Denver and providing outreach, intervention and education to the GLBT population of Colorado, EC is involved in documenting violence and harassment to GLBT youth through our **Anti-Violence Project**. In addition to providing documentation, EC acts "in a coordinating position and as a fiscal agent. We can accept grants and donations on behalf of the coalition," says director Sue Anderson. 'Students can call in to report and get victims assistance, and we refer (them) to other support services."
The AVP 24-hour crisis hotline number is (303) 852-5094.

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
With seventy chapters nationwide, GLSEN is an organization of teachers and community members gay and straight, with the goal of "creating a safe and equitable learning environment," according to co-chair Tracy Phariss. Phariss considers GLSEN "proactive, not reactive" in their provision of such programs as "Safe Place—Safe Person," a statewide campaign to identify a safe person in every public school, and as many private schools as possible, in Colorado. Safe persons will be trained on how to overcome resistance in the community and with other school staff. GLSEN sponsors the Back to School campaign in September, where GLBT adults are encouraged to write to their old schools and let the schools know what it was like when they were students. GLSEN also has a manual on how to establish gay/straight alliances and GLBT support groups, and it works to change school policies and complaint procedures to be inclusive of GLBT students.
Contact GLSEN at (303) 936-6562 or (303) 770-6530.

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
PFLAG provides support to friends and families of GLBT individuals. They hold discussion groups for parents and also provide a family environment for GLBT persons who may not have had family support. As a member of the CSSC, PFLAG will provide workshops for PTAs, teachers, and churches, and educate schools and parents on the hazards GLBT youth face at school. They are also assisting CSSC in distributing posters at schools encouraging youth to report to the Anti-Violence Project any threats, harassment or slurs by peers or teachers, or any teacher inaction to such problems. The posters will be distributed to 1,000 schools in September, then PFLAG members will follow up with the schools to encourage display of the posters. There are 11 PFLAG chapters in Colorado.
Contact PFLAG Denver at (303) 573-5861 or the PFLAG in your area.

Youth Services at the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Community Services Center of Colorado (The Center)
Headed by Emily Hassler, Youth Services at the Center is located in Denver and provides a variety of support services for GLBT youth, a group for HIV+ youth, a bisexual group, suburban youth groups, groups for young men and women, and Youth Event Staff (YES), a political and social action group. Youth Services also provides a 24-hour crisis hotline, individual counseling and social events such as the annual Queer Prom.

As a member of the CSSC, the Center acts in collaboration with GLSEN to assist teens in locating safe persons at school then offering training to schools where youth are reporting problems, including technical training such as how to provide a safe space at school. The Center has a speaker's bureau of trained youth who are available to present to staff and students, but, according to Hassler, "the majority of schools are not receptive." She says the most receptive schools are those with a diversity task force. A problem, says Hassler, is that, often, speakers and trainers are invited in "after the fact instead of as a preventive piece. A lot of schools don't do preventive stuff." She feels that, by then, the damage to the student has been done.
Call (303) 831-6268 x14.

Open and Affirming Sexual Orientation Support (OASOS) • Boulder/ Longmont
OASOS is a program through the Boulder County Health Department providing a speaker's bureau and support groups for GLBT youth in Boulder and Longmont, as well as organizing monthly community groups in both these towns to work on safe space projects for students and providing safe teacher training. Because Longmont is a smaller town, it is more difficult for young people to be out there, according to OASOS Director Linda Beeler.

Boulder Valley school district has been more supportive, inviting speakers to the school, and New Vista alternative school has given permission for the students to have a Gay/Straight Alliance. Boulder Valley School District has a sexual orientation to their non-discrimination policy, but many teachers are not aware of it. Students at Boulder High formed the Boulder High Alliance Advocating Non-Discrimination (BAAND), which covers a range of diversity issues, including sexual orientation. A straight student at Longmont High School is working to form a gay/straight club there.
Contact OASOS at (303) 413-7504

San Juan Basin Health Department, Special Populations Program
Along with her work with **the Rainbow Connection**, a support group for GLBT youth in Durango and southwest Colorado, staff member Amy Potter provides information, free condoms and dental dams and HIV-prevention education for both GLBT and straight youth. Potter does in-school work, too, educating staff on homophobia and making schools safe for students.

There have been mixed reactions by the schools to Potter's work. A recent letter sent to school counselors and teachers offering presentations in the schools received a good response, with three high schools and two middle schools scheduling trainings. In February the Project organized a conference for school staff, students and parents to focus on relationship issues, drug use, and tolerance and acceptance of GLBT youth. Some schools threw away the material sent to them and others refused to pass it out. Organizers then went to school counselors and private therapists for help in advertising the conference. 48 people attended.

Potter is not seeing a great deal of support for GLBT youth in Durango and surrounding communities. Some teens will come to the support group, then stop attending for fear of being discovered. Others want to come out, but "don't feel the community is ready," according to Potter. Some school counselors who were approached about the conference stated that they didn't have gay teens in their school. Potter hopes that giving schools resources such as posters and information will help more teens come out. However, the grant which funds the Special Populations Project runs out in June. If it is not renewed, the Rainbow Connection support group may survive, but the other services will not.
Call (970) 247-5702 x229 for more info.

Community Council for Adolescent Development (CCAD)
This Colorado Springs group was founded by Regina DiPadova, the current acting director. The all-volunteer program, funded by grants and donations, provides a support group, a recreational program, a foster care program and referrals for free HIV/STD testing and other services to youth ages 14-21. The youth group, InsideOut, began through the El Paso County Health Department as a drug and alcohol program for youth, but many GLBT youth who did not have drug or alcohol problems began attending the support group. In July of 1997, CCAD became an independent community program. Every Wednesday beginning at 4:30, youth can come in for assessment and private one-on-one discussions with facilitators. At 5:30, the youth group is held and at 6:30, recreational activities begin. Picnics, dances and other activities are sometimes held on weekends as well. The foster care program works with youth who have been kicked out of their homes or are unsafe in their homes due to GLBT issues. Gay, lesbian, and GLBT-sensitive foster homes have been identified to care for these teens until they can return home.

DiPadova says the program "is in the beginning stages of addressing problems in the schools." Students have tried to put up posters for the InsideOut program or to advertise scholarships for GLBT teens but have been told to take them down. DiPadova hopes to address this at school board meetings. InsideOut, which services 25-35 youth and has been used as a model for other programs in Colorado and New Mexico, also has a Safe Teacher program and has identified a safe teacher in every high school in Colorado Springs.
Call (719) 575-8484.

Individuals from the following organizations helped form CSSC:
Coloradans Working Together Preventing HIV/AIDS; Jeffco Dept. of Health and Environment, Health Education Program; and Mountain States Network Against Bigotry.

GLBT youth groups also exist in Ft. Collins through Lambda Community Center (call 970-221-3247) and Pueblo through Pueblo After 2 (call 719-583-4311).

Behind the Headlines
Profiles of Colorado Youth

"The Cheerleader"

Cheerleader tryouts at West High School in Denver occur in the spring, with a training camp over the summer. When students resume classes in the fall, the new cheerleading squad is in place, trained and ready to begin supporting the school's teams at sporting events. Cheerleaders must try out in front of a panel and be voted in. They must have and maintain a certain grade-point average. Sixteen-year-old Amber Gutierrez was notified in May of 1997 that she would be on the squad that fall as a sophomore. After cheering with her classmates for almost four months, she quit cheerleading in December of 1997 when she no longer felt a part of the squad.

Her fellow cheerleaders had found out that Amber identifies as bisexual and the group that had once included her as a member now ignored or taunted her.

"(The other cheerleaders) isolated me," Amber says. They would walk together, leaving her out and talk about her, making homophobic comments. Cheering wasn't fun anymore. And although the cheerleading coach did not pressure Amber to quit, "she didn't try to make me feel wanted. She didn't try to talk me out of quitting." Amber also says the coach did not confront the other squad members or try to stop the harassment, nor did other school personnel.

"I hoped they would come and talk to me, try to see how to make it better, but they didn't."

Amber has known she was bisexual since she was a child, but decided to come out when she became attracted to a girl at school. She says she first came out to friends, many of whom were gay. She was accepted by these friends, but lost her best friend over the incident. When she came out to her parents and family, they were all supportive. But many of her classmates were not. Amber states that, during choir class, she and another student were the target of verbal assaults about their sexuality. When they asked the teacher for help, they were told it would be stopped, but it was not. A larger confrontation began outside of class. As a result, Amber's mother did not feel her daughter was safe in school and filed a complaint with the ACLU. According to Amber, the ACLU did contact the principal on March 6, but the school has not yet responded to the complaint.

The superintendent contacted Amber's mother to tell her of a support group for gay and lesbian students at the school, but Amber has not heard of it and has not been given any information. Amber thinks there are about ten other students who are "out" in school. She says they get hassled by other students. Amber hopes to stay at West, although her mother has considered taking her out. She still has a group of friends, but has missed a lot of school because she was upset and intimidated by the harassment.

A new rule states that it is mandatory to have a parent conference when someone quits the cheerleading squad. The rule was implemented after Amber quit. Her parents were never called in for a conference.

Anti-Violence Project

by Rebecca Buretta

Can You Protect Yourself From Hate Violence?

There is a trend in America. Statistics have shown a decrease in violence. The U.S. Department of Justice is indicating a double-digit decrease in violent crime reported nationally in 1997. Conversely, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) documents a 2% increase in anti-gay violence across the country. Hate-motivated crime continues to rise for our community. The need is greater than ever to educate people on how to be safe.

Colorado's Ethnic Intimidation Statute does not include sexual orientation. In 1997, the Colorado legislature showed new promise of passing of our hate crimes law. However, after passing the Senate, the bill was killed in the House Appropriations Committee. And the 1998 bill didn't even get to the Senate — it was killed on April 9, in the same committee as last year, on a 7-3 vote. Without a Hate Crimes law, our best defense is to increase reporting of these crimes both to police and to AVP. We need to be able to demonstrate — to the legislature and to law enforcement — that hate violence is indeed perpetrated on gay, lesbian, bi and trans people. We need to show that there is a need for this law, and for these services.

Reporting helps to prosecute perpetrators and deter other potential perpetrators, helps victims receive compensation, and raises the level of awareness of hate crimes.

Hate crimes are more than random acts of violence; they are a way to reinforce the unacceptability of gays and lesbians, especially "out" GLBT folks, in our society. They serve to send a clear message about power and control. Persons who commit hate crimes are in effect saying, "Go back into the closet!" When discrimination and social stratification is threatened by gains in political or cultural equality, some will revert to vigilante acts of violence. Therefore, the social implications of hate crimes are domination and the continuance of the social stratification maintained by our society.

Hate crimes have a greater impact on victims than other types of crimes. According to preliminary research by the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence, victims of bias crimes suffer two to three times more symptoms of trauma than victims of comparable crimes that do not involve prejudice. People react in a variety of ways. Some common reactions are headaches, stomach aches, difficulty sleeping, change in appetite, sexual difficulties, a general lack of energy, denial, anger, loneliness, fear, anxiety, nightmares, flashbacks, depression, and problems with concentration. If you are a victim of a hate crime, be conscious of these normal reactions.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender victims of hate crimes also may experience internalized homophobia. Hate crimes can reinforce for victims all that society has taught us to hate in ourselves. This adds to the lack of reporting of such incidents. This, of course, is the desire of the perpetrator. **Do not blame yourself for these hate crimes.** They did not occur because you were too "out." They happen as part of a larger issue of power in our society.

Hate crimes reinforce for victims all that society has taught us to hate in ourselves. This adds to the lack of reporting .

Can we protect ourselves? Unfortunately, because hate crimes are so often unprovoked, safety strategies are difficult. There are some things you can do to minimize your risk:

- **Use your street smarts!** Do not walk alone at night, especially after consuming alcohol. If you must walk alone, use well lit streets.
- **Listen to your intuition.** If a place or a person makes you uncomfortable, leave and get to a safe place quickly. Do not engage if someone is calling you names and threatening you with violence. Do not provoke or become confrontational. The perpetrator may be waiting for you to give him/her the contact they need to justify the hate crime.
- **Project confidence and carry a whistle.**
- **Be careful with new acquaintances.** If you decide to bring someone home, introduce her/him to someone so that at least one person knows who you left with.
- **Record suspicious activity.** Like other forms of violence, hate crimes may start with non-criminal activity. If you suspect a neighbor or someone else is harassing you, keep track of strange phone calls and other suspicious activity.

Also, know that some perpetrators will target "predominately gay" areas. These might include parking lots of gay organizations, gay pride functions, gay clubs, known areas of public sex, bath houses, etc. When frequenting these locations, please make safety a priority.

There is no way to truly be safe from hate crimes. The best defense we have is a combination of being street smart and taking action. This can be done through reporting to create accurate statistics, through overall violence reduction in our society, and from acceptance of GLBT people within our culture.

If you are a victim of a hate crime, seek help! Call the police and receive medical attention if needed. When the police respond, get the name and badge number of the responding officer(s). Call AVP, we have a 24-hour crisis line. In the Denver local calling area, call (303) 852-5094; you can also call toll-free (888) 557-4441 x2. We can help you work through law enforcement, judicial, and service systems. Plus, it is **IMPORTANT** that you **REPORT** crimes to AVP as well. We use these statistics in our work with law enforcement agencies, schools, and elected officials. Reporting helps to prosecute perpetrators and deter other potential perpetrators, helps victims receive compensation, and raises the level of awareness of hate crimes.

Report hate crimes, or they'll never stop.

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TAKING CARE OF ALL YOUR INTERNET NEEDS • HOST TO EQUALITY COLORADO'S WEBSITE

THANK YOU!

Thanks to Leslie and Katherine for the time you spent helping with our website!

Thanks to Walt for your help as our newest web guy!

Thanks to Leslie Hillen for your endless energy helping to build Second Mondays and our phone tree. We'll miss you!

Thanks to Dainna and Margaret & Becky for their hospitality at our Aurora and Thornton house parties!

Thanks to Rachel for your help as office manager!

Thanks to Mike Duncan, Linda Boedeker, and the folks at Ground Zero for their co-sponsorship of our first Colorado Springs fundraiser!

Thanks to Isabel Lopez for facilitating the most recent anti-racism training!

Thanks to Mendez & Associates, for fighting the good fight!

Out and About: News & Notes

EQUALITY LIBRARY PROJECT

Too often, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender folks outside of major metropolitan areas don't have much access to learning about gay culture, history, politics, etc. Also, parents, friends, and other potential allies of GLBT people may not have local PFLAGs or other resources to help them better understand who GLBT folks are. Their local libraries may not carry any such books. Bookstores don't stock them. And local organizations are small — if they exist at all.

Equality Colorado has a commitment to working with these rural communities. That's why we've come up with the Equality Library Project. We're working with community-based organizers in Gunnison, Fort Morgan, Salida, and Alamosa to set up local lending libraries which would give community members access to:

- books
- magazines & newspapers
- videos
- pamphlets, resource guides, etc.

ACTION!

If you have any materials that you'd like to donate, contact Equality and we'll get you connected!

FORT COLLINS FACES REPEAL EFFORT

Opposition forces to Fort Collins' Human Rights Ordinance Revision delivered their petitions to the City Clerk on April 7. They're trying to repeal the City Council vote to update the ordinance and add sexual orientation, among other new categories. Greg Snyder, a local businessman affiliated with the *Christian Coalition, turned in approximately 2,580* signatures. 1,783 of those must be valid for the petition to have any effect. Validation will happen by April 14; from there the City Council will decide on May 5 whether to repeal their own unanimous vote or to send it to the voters, either in a special election or on the November ballot.

In other news, the City Manager recently banned anti-gay discrimination among municipal employees.

DEFEATED NAVY KEEPS AFTER MCVEIGH

The Justice Department filed a notice of appeal today on behalf of the US Navy, indicating it would appeal the cyber-snooping case of decorated sailor Timothy R. McVeigh, according to press sources. Advocates fear the government's move to be part of a concerted strategy to enshrine its ability to spy on American citizens using the Internet.

McVeigh's plight gained international attention earlier this year after the Navy announced its intentions to discharge the 17-year veteran based on illegally-obtained evidence suggesting he might be gay. Federal Judge Stanley Sporkin, a Reagan appointee, ruled against the Navy on January 29th, 1998, finding that DoD investigators violated federal wire-tap law (the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, or ECPA) and the President's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in seeking and obtaining Mr. McVeigh's confidential email account information from America Online by subterfuge, and without a court order.

Oh, by the way, gay discharges have risen 67% since the implementation of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" policy. The number of discharges in 1997 was 997, the highest number since 1989.

ACTION!

- Tell them that, rather than contributing to harassment, the Pentagon should instead be focusing on the real problems of anti-gay violence, harassment, witch hunts, and "asking" by commanders.

Secretary of Defense William Cohen, comment via DoD web page: www.defenselink.mil/faq/comment voice: (703) 697-5737; fax: (703) 695-1219; snail: 1000 Defense Pentagon, Washington, D.C. 20301.

President William J. Clinton, email: president@whitehouse.gov; voice: (202) 456-1111; snail: White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20500

The List — Fort Collins Civil Rights Categories

Even though "sexual orientation" is getting most of the attention, there are several other categories under which discrimination will be prohibited under Fort Collins's revised Human Rights Ordinance. Interestingly, for nearly half of these (in bold), it's at least theoretically possible to "change" one's status, as opponents suggest gays can do (thus knocking sexual orientation out of contention for "protected status").

- disability
- **religion**
- **familial status**
- age
- **sex**
- color
- race
- national origin

OKLAHOMA FAILS TO IMPRESS AGAIN

The House of Representatives has passed a measure that would ban "homosexuals" from working in public schools. A similar law was struck down as unconstitutional in 1985. The bill has yet to be approved by the Senate.

Trivia answer

question on p. 12

In 1975, Bella Abzug, who passed away in April '98, introduced the bill now pared down and known as ENDA. It has yet to pass either house.

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Got Security?
Here's the deal. If you give Equality Colorado a minimum donation of $25, you can get a free alarm system, including a five-year warranty, and execute an alarm monitoring contract through Mountain Central Alarm for a three-year period at the low monthly rate of $24.95. Then, Jack Lascari of MCA will also donate $25 to Equality Colorado. We raise funds, you stay safe!
Mountain Central Alarm is currently providing fundraising promotions for The Children's Hospital, The Diana Price Fish Foundation, Qualife Wellness Community, Channel 6 Public Television, University of Colorado, and others.
Mountain Central Alarm, Inc.
2785 N. Speer Blvd., Suite 146 • Denver, CO 80211
(303) 455-2711 • fax (303) 561-1664
Ask for Jack Lascari.

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Around the State

Regional Conferences

BUILDING BRIDGES

Equality Colorado's Southern Colorado Conference

Saturday, June 13, 1998

Holy Cross Abbey (Field House) • 2951 E. Highway 50

Cañon City, CO

9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

What it's about...

The main goals of "Building Bridges" are to:

• provide **networking opportunities** for Southern Colorado gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and supportive folks.

• **promote discussions** on issues that divide us in the movement for justice in Southern Colorado.

The four main topics we'll discuss are:

• **generations** • **race/culture**

• **gender/sexuality** • **geographical barriers**

We hope that by having these discussions, we can begin the process of learning about each other, ourselves, and overcome divisions to make for a stronger community overall.

We especially encourage our **straight allies** to attend, to learn about issues, and contribute to the discussions!

Supporting Organizations Fusion, Southern Colorado AIDS Project, PFLAG Colorado Springs, PFLAG Pueblo, PFLAG Collegiate Peaks, One in Ten, La Guia, CCAD/InsideOut, Ground Zero, Pikes Peak Gay and Lesbian Community Center, NetCore, Gill Foundation, Citizens Project, SCIRTS (Southern Colorado Intra-Regional Transgender Society)

Catering by Classic Catering

Scholarship Sponsors NetCore and area businesses

ACROSS the DIVIDE

Equality Colorado's Western Slope Organizing Conference

Saturday, June 6, 1998

Holiday Inn Express • 1391 S. Townsend Ave.

Montrose, CO

9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

What it's about...

"Across the Divide" is Equality Colorado's first "general" regional organizing conference for the Western Slope. Our main goal is to bring people from several communities together to **network** with and learn from each other. We'll provide **workshops** and **panel discussions** aimed at building skills, increasing education, and creating a stronger sense of community for GLBT and supportive people on Colorado's Western Slope.

Workshop topics will include:

• working with law enforcement on issues of violence • GLBT issues in Native American cultures • building resources for your organization • the 1998 elections • legal issues for same-sex couples • youth issues/youth support • a look at people with HIV/AIDS in rural areas ... and much more!

welcome: Paul Suppes Chief of Police, Delta, Colorado

keynote speaker: Gwen Lachelt San Juan Citizens Alliance

co-sponsors Western Equality, North Fork Valley Restaurants

scholarship sponsors San Juan Basin Health Dept. WesCAP

presenting sponsors CLIP, Community Resource Center

supporting organizations Gay & Lesbian Alliance of Durango; Western State College LGBTA; PFLAG/Durango; WWP; GLBA of Ft. Lewis College; Western Colorado Congress

Early Bird rates for both conferences before April 30 (add $5 after 4/30)

Early bird registration • $10 Low-income or student • $5 Scholarships and travel stipends are also available.

To register, contact Equality Colorado at (888) 557-4441 x4 or (303) 839-5540 x4; email ecjonathan@aol.com.

Community housing & carpooling may also be available on request.

Equality Pride Awards

June 27, 1998 • 7-9 p.m.

(the night before PrideFest)

Temple Events Center, Denver

If there's someone in your community who has been a hero on issues of gay/lesbian/bi/trans equality, contact Equality Colorado for a nomination form.

Tickets are $20, with patron rates available.

Contact us for details.

Do you bike?

If so, join *OUTSpokin'*, the hardest working gay/lesbian/bi/trans/allies bicycle troupe in Colorado.

OutSpokin' is training now for the Courage Classic, a ride in the mountains slated for the weekend of July 17, 1998. You need to raise $175 to ride, $100 of which will be matched by OUTSpokin' sponsor, the Gay and Lesbian Fund for Colorado. By joining, you'll also get a cycling jersey worth $35! And you get to participate in group training rides, happy hours, and car pool to the Tour. Just call (303) 831-6268 x22 for more information. You'll be glad you did.

Did you know?

- **Trinidad now has a monthly GLBT/ally movie-watching group!**
- **GLBT & supportive folks in the Northeast Plains (Fort Morgan, Brush, and Sterling) get together monthly for potlucks!**
- **There are even gay communities in towns as small as Rocky Ford and Craig!**

Find out about contacts in your area! Contact Jonathan at (303) 839-5540 x4 or toll-free at (888) 557-4441 x4 or email ecjonathan@aol.com.

Notable Quotables

"I still hear people say that I should not be talking about the rights of lesbian and gay people and I should stick to the issue of racial justice. But I hasten to remind them that Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' ... I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream to make room at the table of brother- and sisterhood for lesbian and gay people ... Gays and lesbians stood up for civil rights in Montgomery (and) Selma; in Albany, Ga., and St. Augustine, Fla.; and many other campaigns of the civil rights movement. These courageous men and women fought for my freedom at a time when they could find few voices for their own."'

Coretta Scott King

"Special rights like Hispanics and Negroes have earned over the years, we are against."

Colorado Springs Christian Coalition leader Chuck Gosnell at a March Ft. Collins training, when asked for a definition of "special rights."

Recent *Weekly World News* headline: "Bible Expert's Shocking Claim: Satan is Gay!" Among the tip-offs cited: Satan's temptation of Jesus in the desert is a "classic gay seduction scene" and "although red is now regarded as the devil's color, up until modern times most artistic depictions of Satan show his costume as a much lighter shade -- closer to pink."

"A country this big is always going to sport somebody doing something I'm not keen about -- line dancing comes to mind -- but adults ought to be free to fill their days and nights as they wish, provided they don't insist I join the festivities and don't demand special status. And equal access to jobs and benefits for those who are gay aren't demands for special status. That constitutes an agenda rooted in democratic ideas.

Steve Twomey, Washington Post

"Things will no doubt get worse once Weaver becomes an accomplished lesbian, which like most things, probably takes time."

Richard Cohen, on the case of Wendy Weaver, the Utah high school teacher and coach under fire because she is a "practicing lesbian."

"In the process of history, homosexuals have never been castrated, millions of them never died. Homosexuality is a decision. It's not a race. And when you look at it, people from all different ethnic backgrounds are living this lifestyle, but people from all different ethnic backgrounds are also liars and cheaters and malicious and backstabbers."

Losing Super Bowl Defensive Lineman Reggie White, in a speech to the Wisconsin legislature

"I must admit that my examples may have been somewhat clumsy and inappropriate on how the races differ, but my intent was not to demean anyone. ... But I do not apologize for standing on God's word when it comes to sin in my life and others."

Losing Super Bowl Defensive Lineman Reggie White, apologizing for offensive racial stereotypes made in the same speech

"Natural scientists have discovered homosexuality in mammals, birds and insects. Clearly, God is more comfortable with diversity than we are!"

Rev. Williams Sloane Coffin, responding to losing Super Bowl Defensive Lineman Reggie White

"I grew up in Longmont, Colorado. Such an open-minded state, huh? After I corrected another first-grader and said that Barbie's best friend was Midge, not Skipper, it was twelve *really long years.*"

California-based comedian Paul Jacek

Trivia

answer on p. 10

Who introduced the first Congressional bill to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, employment and public accommodations?

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